

The Latest Leak in Washington

Another batch of confidential government documents, stamped "Secret Sensitive" and bearing on the Nixon administration's attitude toward the India-Pakistan war, have got into print.

Jack Anderson, a Washington columnist, obtained them from a source he will not identify and began printing them in his column. Then he turned over the complete texts to the Washington Post, which published them.

Publication was attended with much fanfare, and Anderson has endeavored to represent the secret papers as evidence that the administration was deceitful in professing neutrality during the brief war, which resulted in East Pakistan being detached from Pakistan and emerging as an independent Bengali nation, Bangla Desh.

The whole business is at best a silly flap. The documents present little that was not already known. President Nixon did not conceal the fact that he was critical of India for resorting to hostilities. His principal concern, as the papers disclose, was that India would not rest content with a victory in East Pakistan—an outcome the administration accepted as inevitable—but might go on to "extinguish" West Pakistan as well. We cannot see that the administration can be faulted for its anxiety over India's intervention.

Nor is there any legitimate ground for criticizing the administration because it sought action to halt the war from the United Nations. This newspaper had said at the time that the U. N. should intervene. The administration was sufficiently realistic to realize that little could be expected from the U. N. Dr. Henry Kissinger, the President's foreign policy adviser, told associates with whom he conferred, "If the U. N. can't operate in this kind of situation effectively, its utility has come to an end." A Soviet veto in support of India was anticipated in the Security Council and materialized as expected.

Mr. Nixon, according to the documents, was wrathful because some administration sources providing back-

ground information were taking a pro-India line. He wanted "a certain coolness" toward the Indians. "It is quite obvious," said Dr. Kissinger, "that the President is not inclined to let the Paks be defeated. . . . He wants to tilt in favor of Pakistan."

Breaking secrets has become a fashionable Washington stunt. Daniel Ellsberg, a former research assistant on defense matters, admittedly leaked a great number of secret documents on policy discussions on the Viet Nam war to the New York Times and the Washington Post and is now under indictment for violating his security responsibilities.

The present leakage, on its face, is even more flagrant, for Ellsberg's "Pentagon papers" covered a period essentially in the historical past, ending about 1965. The papers published by Anderson, on the other hand, cover a current international crisis.

The importance of Anderson's disclosures, based on minutes of the National Security Council's Washington Special Action Group, consisting of high civilian and military officials, has been greatly exaggerated. The effect of publishing them is to condone military aggression, to discredit policymaking at the White House level, and to enhance the stature of the Soviet Union, which openly sided with India.

Anderson says he has many additional documents and has shown 20 folders to a reporter. He has material relating not only to the war on the Indian subcontinent but to diplomatic communications. He has, for example, published a disparaging assessment by the American ambassador in Cambodia of government leaders in that country, suggesting that the regime might collapse.

The pattern of leaks is designed to discredit the policy of the American government and every effort should be made to put a stop to it. Those who leak the secrets and those who exaggerate their importance in print are addicted to a juvenile delight in embarrassing the officials who must make the hard decisions which chart our country's course.